

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 EB-04 MC-01 INT-05 FEA-01 L-01

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8660

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP SNAR BM

SUBJ: HELICOPTER TENDER

1. IDEA OF ACQUIRING HELICOPTERS TO SUPPLY OFFSHORE RIGS ORIGINATED IN MINISTRY OF MINES, APPARENTLY WITH DR. NYI NYI, AS A MEANS OF MAXIMIZING BURMESE EARNINGS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE IN CONNECTION WITH OFFSHORE EXPLORATION. WE SURMISE THAT IT WAS INSPIRED BY LEARNING OF VARIOUS INDONESIAN OPERATIONS IN WHICH PERTAMINA PROVIDES SERVICES OR LEASES EQUIPMENT TO OIL COMPANIES.

2. LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF OIL COMPANIES (AS WELL AS NATIONAL UTILITY HELICOPTERS WHICH PROVIDES HELICOPTER SERVICES TO READING AND BATES AND HAS CONTRACT TO DO SO FOR CITIES SERVICE) ARE AWARE OF GUB INTENTIONS. THEY ARE NOT HAPPY ABOUT PLAN, BUT APPEAR DISPOSED TO GO ALONG PROVIDED THEY ARE SATISFIED THAT HELICOPTERS ACQUIRED BY GUB MEET ALL RELEVANT STANDARDS OF SAFETY OF OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE. IN ADDITION, OIL COMPANIES SAY THEY WILL INSIST ON TWIN-ENGINE HELICOPTERS FLOWN AND MAINTAINED BY EXPATRIATES.

3. GUB APPARENTLY ENVISAGES THAT HELICOPTERS WOULD BE PURCHASED, OPERATED, AND MAINTAINED BY MYANMA OIL CORPORATION PROBABLY USING PILOTS DETAILED BY BURMA AIR FORCE. THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE ANALOGOUS TO UNION OF BURMA AIRWAYS, SOME OF WHOSE PILOTS ARE ALSO AIR FORCE OFFICERS. BAF, BECAUSE OF ITS TECHNICAL EXPERTISE,
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WILL HAVE DOMINANT VOICE IN SELECTION OF AIRCRAFT TO BE PURCHASED,

BUT DOES NOT EXPECT TO BE INVOLVED IN OPERATIONS.

4. WE HAVE NOT EXPLORED FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS WITH GUB, BUT GUB WOULD PROBABLY SEEK A LEASE-PURCHASE ARRANGEMENT. WHATEVER THE FINANCING, THE PURCHASE COST WOULD ULTIMATELY BE MET BY OIL COMPANIES AS PART OF EXPLORATION COSTS. WE MUST EMPHASIZE, HOWEVER, THAT WHOLE PLAN REMAINS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE, NOT LEAST BECAUSE OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT BAF IS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SCHEME. INTERESTED U.S. COMPANIES SHOULD BE AWARE OF HIGHLY TENTATIVE NATURE OF PROPOSED HELICOPTER ACQUISITION.
OSBORN

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